

Reducing Hospitalization Rates

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Nearly 23,000 Missouri home care patients are hospitalized each year.

With the highest quality of care, it is estimated nearly 40% of these hospitalizations may be avoidable. CMS has asked the home health community to reduce the number of home health patients that are going back into the hospital while under our care. Since hospitalizations are often a result of declining patient health status, agency acute care hospitalization (ACH) rates are one indicator of the quality of care being delivered at each agency.

Can an agency really impact patient rehospitalizations? The good news is some states are seeing improvements. CMS believes that states with ACH rate averages greater than 25% have the most potential to improve their rehospitalization rates. There are 41 states, including Missouri, that had ACH rates higher than 25% in January 2005. These 41 states began work to reduce their hospitalization rates in August 2005. So far, Missouri rehospitalization rates continue to rise. The Missouri state ACH rate was 27.76% in Jan 2005 and was 28.26% in June 2006. Missouri's level of improvement is ranked 31st out of the 41 states working to reduce their hospitalization rates. At this time, 22 states have improved their ACH rates, and 19 states, including Missouri, have worsened. One of Missouri's neighboring states is currently ranked #5 in improvement. Although we have not seen our statewide Missouri rate fall yet, some Missouri agencies are already showing excellent improvement and 25 Missouri agencies now have ACH rates less than 20%!

What are the successful states/agencies doing?

Assessing for rehospitalization and fall risk at Start of Care (SOC)

Implementing an individualized emergency care plan at SOC and discussing the emergency plan at each visit.

Visiting high risk patients more frequently in the first two weeks of care, often daily during the first 2-3 days of care.

Increasing their use of phone calls to assess patient status and provide teaching.

Focusing teaching on disease management and patient self care.

Assisting the patient with medication simplification and improving medication management.

Reducing hospitalization rates will require a renewed focus on excellent assessment, care planning and clinical intervention. Fortunately, that is one of the main reasons we were attracted to home care in the first place. Home care staff are highly skilled problem solvers who care for complex and acutely ill clients in a challenging setting, the home. We can do this!

For more information on the ACH project, contact the Missouri Medicare Quality Improvement Organization, Primaris, at 1-800-735-6776. On the eastern side of the state, ask for Home Health Program Manager, Teresa Northcutt at extension 145, or on the western side of the state contact Home Health Program Manager, Lisa Musgrave at extension 190.

MO-06-100-HH This material was prepared by Primaris, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Missouri, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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